DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 200 883 CG 015 116

AUTHOR Birk, Janice M.
TITLE Relevancy and Alliance: Cornerstones in Training Counselors of Men.
PUB DATE Sep 80
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (88th, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, September 1-5, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Civil Liberties; Counseling Effectiveness; Counselor Attitudes; *Counselor Client Relationship; *Counselor Training; *Males; Sex Fairness; *Sex Role; *Sex Stereotypes; Social Influences; *Socialization; State of the Art Reviews; Stress Variables

ABSTRACT

The women's movement has made counselors aware of ways that socialization, stereotyping and sexism negatively affect the female client. The effects of socialization and stereotyping are now being questioned for male clients. Counselors of men must understand their own gender-related attitudes and their potentially negative effects on male clients to insure that men are not limited to rigid roles as a result of counselor intervention. Goals central to the training of counselors for men include the recognition of: (1) the impact of significant social forces in molding sex roles; (2) individual sex role as a consequence of social expectations; (3) clients' gender-related problems; and (4) the effect of counselor and client variables on the counseling process and outcome. Advocates of women and men must work together on the issue of sex equity in classrooms, training sessions, workshops, research projects, and committees. Both sexes must understand the relevance of gender and sex role stereotyping and have a commitment to sex equity for men and women before the complexity of sex role socialization can be fully understood and challenged. (NRB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED200883

Relevancy and Alliance:

Cornerstones in Training Counselors of Men

Janice M. Birk

University of Maryland - College Park

CG 015116

Paper presented at the American Psychological Association, Montreal, 1980. Symposium entitled, "Sex Role Conflicts, Sexism, Masculinity: Psychological Implications for Counseling Psychologists."

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Janice M. Birk

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Relevance and Alliance: Cornerstones in Training Counselors of Men

Writing this article has a particular relevance for me. It represents a journey of sorts -- a journey to a perspective of conciliation and collaboration regarding training for counselors of men. The "journey" is reflected in the observation that much of my professional energy has been channeled toward advocacy for women. That would be clear from even a partial examination of my professional efforts, such as the career interventions I've suggested (Birk, 1976a; 1976b), my participation in analyses of graduate texts in psychology (Birk, Barbanel, Brooks, Herman, Juhasz, Seltzer & Tangri, 1974) and of illustrations in career information (Birk, Tanney & Cooper, 1979), and the editorial role I shared in special issues of The Counseling Psychologist on counseling women (Birk & Tanney, 1976; Hill, Birk, Blimline, Leonard, Hoffman & Tanney, 1979). My commitment to the concerns of women has been serious. At times when I reflected on the profession's progress in responsibly attending to the inhibiting effects of sexism for women, and publicly noted my impatience (Blimline & Birk, 1979), I also experienced a creeping awareness of parallel jeopardy for men related to sex role stereotypy (Birk, 1979).

Concomitant with my awareness of the myriad ways that sex role stereotypy and conflicts detract from women's well-being was a concern regarding training for counselors of women, specifically academic training programs preparing master's and doctoral level practitioners. Similarly, as my awareness increased regarding sexism and men, my concerns regarding training generalized to implications for men. I am going to assume that (a) just as my concern for effective training for counselors of women was predicated on my more basic concern about women's limitations due to ascribed gender roles, and (b) just as awareness of the negative effects of sex role

stereotypes for men has resulted in my auxiliary concern for effective training for counselors of men, so too will the profession's commitment to effective training for counselors of men be predicated on its awareness of how the socialization process impinges upon men's lives. Marshalling support and resources for effectively training counselors of men is (as has been the case for training counselors of women) a matter of relevance.

Relevance of Sexism for Women

It's been clear to women for a long time that the socialization process has channeled them to political and economic serfdom. In American society men are the dominant force in governance (e.g., between 1776 and 1976 only 11 women served in the U. S. Senate), in higher education (college and university positions are 75% male [U. S. Department of Labor, 1975]), and in buying power (in 1977, full-time women workers had a median income that was approximately $6300 less than men, [U. S. Department of Labor, 1979]). This profile is not true of all societies, but it is true of ours, and the eventual spin-off from our collective American experience has been what's come to be labelled as "the women's movement." What the women's movement has meant to each of us on a personal basis is probably as varied as it is complex; none of us, however, has escaped some ripple of its tide. Within the counseling profession the effect has been a focus on ways that socialization, stereotypy and sexism negatively affect the female seeking our services and expertise.

Men were typically not portrayed as victims of sexism, and in time, sexism, sex equity and Title IX became terms synonymous with "women." Relatedly, the research on sexism usually had its results discussed from the perspective of women's disadvantage. It is interesting to note that the often-quoted study by Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosenkrantz and Vogel (1970) is typically interpreted as evidence of mental health practitioners' double standard of health which discriminates unfavorably against women. My point is not to question the findings

but to observe that a case could also be made for men: if men, to be healthy, must be independent, active and unemotional, then I would say that's quite a burden! I also believe that many projects and conferences took on the flavor of women's fight for sex-fair counseling interventions. It was, and perhaps still is, not unusual for women trainers conducting workshops on sex equality to respond to questions about the implications for males with, "Let men worry about that." It seems not at all presumptuous to wonder if women, germane to their struggle for sex fairness, have been rather indifferent to the implications for men and have been governed primarily by self-interests. Exceptions always existed, of course, but a common focus (covert if not overt) for many efforts toward sex equity has been women -- and that, I believe, is because women have found sex equity quite relevant for themselves and, consequently have been the ones to spearhead related training activities with a singular focus.

Relevance of Sexism for Men

To the extent that men have been cognizant of gender-related issues and strains, they seemed to have categorized these as women's issues. Men in general have not paid much attention to sex roles and their impact on men's lives. Sexism has not been relevant for men.

Unlike women, men have not been economically and politically disadvantaged by their social and sex role. As a matter of fact, given the positions accorded them ("head of the house"; "man about town"; "king of the mountain"; "man in command"), it is not surprising that to some men it would have been foolish to disrupt the status quo. In many ways, power and status have been a function of the male gender (Unger, 1976) and to question the impact of sex-ascribed attributes and stereotypes would be to jeopardize men's "enviable" position. At least so it seemed.

Recently, assumptions about perquisites of being male have been scrutinized, and for many the results are startling. Within a short period of time, awareness of men's disadvantaged position vis-a-vis sex role pressures and expectations has been heightened to the point where consciousness raising and support groups for men are increasing, popular and professional readings about the male experience are more commonly available, and in our own profession, increasing numbers of convention programs, journal articles, and special journal issues (such as this one) are devoted to the psychosocial aspects and counseling of men. The effects of socialization, the stereotypes of sex roles, and the legacy of being male are now questioned. Sexism is becoming relevant for men.

In some ways the negative effects of being born male in our society are more subtle and less obvious than they are for women. I say this because to the casual and unreflective observer, men have power and are, thus, enviable. The fallacy of this interpretation is elaborated upon by O'Neil (1980) who also meticulously documented other areas where men are penalized by the socialization process: restrictive emotionality, interpersonal life, career development, work life, and home/family life. The deleterious effects are also masked by the facade of strength, competence and fearlessness that men have learned so well to assume.

Relevancy and Training

As our profession more clearly understands the restrictive effects which stem from male sex role stereotypes, men and to some extent women are seeing the need for counselors of men to be clear about their own gender-related attitudes, to understand how those attitudes may be negatively operative for their male clients, and ultimately to insure that men are not limited to rigid roles or inappropriately restircted in any way as a result of a counselor's intervention. What has happened

is that some men are addressing what women have been forcefully addressing regarding themselves for the past decade. That is, many women have already reached an understanding of the delimiting effects of the American socialization process, particularly regarding careers, achievement, and psychological well-being. From that awareness has sprung numerous activities, projects, and near-evangelistic efforts by women (mainly) to educate the profession. The campaign continues for sex-fair counseling interventions for female clients, for service providers who are informed and knowledgeable regarding the germane issues, and for examination of attitudes which might impinge on women's choice regarding careers, lifestyles and behaviors. Men are now on a parallel course relative to struggling against sexism.

Rather than reinvent the (consciousness-raising/training) wheel, perhaps there's something to be gleaned from feminists' efforts to mitigate the harmful effects of sexism. The efforts of one group, the Committee on Women of Division 17 (Counseling Psychology) of the American Psychological Association (APA), are illustrative. The Committee on Women, comprised mainly of women but with some male members, represents a group of helping professionals with some overlapping interests with APGA and which, in fact, has many members of dual APA/APGA affiliation. Beginning in 1977 the Committee on Women began a project to develop principles for counseling women which were intended to guide practitioners and service providers. From these principles evolved a second project which "was guided by a rationale that, in order to competently counsel women according to the Principles for Counseling/Therapy with Women, counselors and counseling psychologists required solid academic and training experiences in the knowledge, skills and attitudes encompassed by the Principles" (Committee on Women, 1980). The outcome of the project was a set of training models intended to be developed eventually into an education package available to training programs. Included among the various training models were a doctoral

specialization in Career Motivation and Multiple Role Planning, a master's specialization in Counseling Women, a summer institute, an internship training program, and individual graduate courses. The models varied in the extent they were tried and validated (Committee on Women, 1980).

Observation of the work of the Committee on Women indicates that during the past several years they have expended a great deal of time and energy to (a) raise the awareness of the counseling profession (by formulation and dissemination of the Principles), and (b) develop training models which would insure that the Principles are integrated and practiced by service providers for women. The parallel course mentioned earlier for advocates of men seems to be similar, that is, raise awareness and develop training programs.

Training for Whom?

When a group exists who feel the relevance of social pressures and stereotypes regarding men (and there now is such a group albeit small), efforts to inform and educate will likely follow. Advocates for men within the counseling profession will find, as did feminists, that persons to educate are in the supermarket and in the classroom, in the office building and in our own houses -- they are everywhere. They are our clients and they are "us." They are men and they are women.

Because someone is male, for example, that doesn't mean that he (a) is aware of sex role conflicts and stereotypes, (b) believes that the male sex role is restrictive and delimiting, and (c) has any investment in examining the issues, let alone changing anything in a personal or professional capacity. Related to this are the findings of numerous studies that attitudes and behaviors of female counselors were just as biased toward female clients as those of male counselors (see, for example, Rohrbaugh, 1979; Stricker, 1977; Tanney & Birk, 1976). There is no definitive support at this time for the assumption that women are more effective

helpers of women than men. What does exist are discrepant empirical data and a debate on the topic which has generated many diverse opinions. I believe it's safe to assume that until responsible research proves otherwise, the same can be said of male awareness and attitudes regarding male clients: same-sex helper/helpee dyads are not necessarily more sex-fair than dual-sex dyads.

Likewise, women need to be made aware of gender-related issues on men. The fact that some women may be aware and concerned about the effects of socialization on women does not mean that they are either aware or concerned about the social impact on men. For some feminists, a singular focus on women is a matter of politics, and where awareness might exist of men's "plight" there is no commitment to reform or re-education for the benefit of men. This last observation carries us back to the notion of relevancy and yet another point related to it. Namely, it's my opinion that until women and men understand the relevance of gender and sex role stereotypy (for their own sex as well as for the other) and until both men and women have a commitment to sex equity that transcends self-interests in regard to their own sex, we will be unable to fully understand the complexity of sex role socialization, let alone adequately challenge and effectively struggle against restrictive roles. This recommendation for alliance is, in my view, crucial to the goals and the process of training counselors of men.

Goals for Training

In formulating goals for training counselors of men I believe it's important to see those goals as integrated with one another and not as training aims in isolation from one another. Several of the broad goals which would be central to the training

are:

1. To understand the impact of significant social forces (e.g., family, church, school) in molding sex roles;
2. To understand the extent and manner in which one's own sex role is a consequence of social expectations versus actual choice;
3. To recognize in persons seeking help the gender-related issues and accompanying pressures, conflicts and strains:
4. To recognize the multiple ways that counselor variables and client variables (specifically in regard to sex roles) affect the counseling process and, possibly, outcome.

Goals 1 and 2. The broad rubric under which these two goals fall is: self-understanding as that relates to the counselor's idiosyncratic socialization process. The interaction of each individual with his or her specific environment (family, school, church, community) determines to some extent the sex role that eventually evolves. This environmental context can be viewed against the backdrop of the more global social context of our particular American culture. Given the influence of the total environmental context, and taking into account possible genetic predispositions, the sex role evolves. Identifying the extent to which one unwittingly responded to external expectations and cues, as opposed to making personal and deliberate choices, is a significant component of self-understanding.

Goal 3. The male client brings with him to the counseling/helping setting a corporate image of "male" (just as female clients bring the corporate image of "female"). He has a view of the world, ways of behaving, fears, dreams, interests and values which in some ways are his only because he is a male in our society. The counselor, who isn't self-aware and who doesn't understand male gender role issues, runs the risk of responding to a male client's persona and not to the person.

At this point an example of role strain and its impact on counseling may be helpful. Consider the fact that from infancy males are perceived a certain way, usually as hardy and strong (Rubin, Provenzano & Luria, 1974); they are responded to in particular ways, including activities that lead to aggression (Moss, 1967); and they receive strong messages to be competitive. aggressive, unemotional, successful, decisive, and generally to be in control (O'Neil, 1980). With such messages as "be strong" and "be in control," it seems reasonable to assume that males would feel more conflicted about seeking help than females. A smaller percentage of males do, in fact, seek counseling than females. Once they have decided to see a counselor, however, the mask of control and strength may persist. One interpretation of how a hurting male may approach counseling with a mask of bravado or disguised feelings is presented by Marino (1979). A caveat seems advisable at this point in the discussion: it would be presumptuous obviously to reduce client dynamics to artifacts of of their sex role. My intent is not to do so but merely to highlight a crucial aspect of the male sex role (control and power) against the backdrop of seeking help.

Goal 4. The reciprocity of impact between counselor and client was an aspect of counseling which Kell and Mueller (1966) discussed years ago. The notion of reciprocity increased in significance for me as I have become impressed with the many ways that sex of the interactants affects the counseling process. When it comes to completely understanding the interactive effects of counselor variables and client variables, findings from our research are incomplete. Some evidence which we do have, however, is sobering and confirms the need for counselors to recognize the impact that their attitudes and behaviors can have on the counseling process, and possibly, outcome. One area in which that seems to be particularly clear is career counseling as evidenced from research on male and female counselors (Tanney & Birk, 1976).

Implementation of Goals

Achievement of the above training goals for counselors of men resides in acquiring knowledge in the areas of male socialization and gender-related issues; assessing and possibly modifying attitudes about sex roles; and finally, learning intervention strategies which maximize counselor helpfulness in relationship to male clients. Where and how do the above activities of acquiring knowledge, assessing/modifying attitudes and learning new interventions occur?

O'Neil (1980) stated that "formal course content is recommended in counselor training programs about sexism, male socialization, and sex role conflicts" (p. 62). Similarly, to implement the Principles related to counseling women, the APA Committee on Women noted earlier is working to develop course outlines, curriculum specializations, and the like. It is clear that counselor advocates for men and those for women are pursuing parallel paths with somehwat dissimilar end-points. Both advocate groups are concerned about pre-service and in-service education about sexism but for different populations, namely, one for men and one for women.

The current reality of the academic training scene, as that relates to sex equity in counseling, is that in some institutions a few curriculum options, usually a course or two, are available on the psychology and counseling of women. As for sex equity in counseling apropos males, that's virtually unheard of. To the extent that change in attitudes resulting from "women's courses" have been evaluated, findings have been positive (see, for example, Scott, Richards & Wade, 1977; Vedovato & Vaughter, 1980) but documentation at this point is sparse. As for mainstreaming areas of knowledge and attitude assessment into the overall curriculum structure, it is for the most part untried, and my own casual observation, without an empirical base, is that when feminists have attempted to mainstream units and modules related to counseling women into the core curriculum (i.e., into such courses as Career Development, Counseling Theories, etc.) they generally have not met with success.

Alliance and Training

Advocates of women who have pursued social change and re-education with only women as the identified consumer/beneficiary have done so from a political and philosophical base. They view the singular focus on women in relationship to sexism as a way to emphasize women's particular disadvantages because of our society and its impact. To many feminists, there is a fear that without a constant campaign for women's rights, women will lose; that without demanding changes, nothing will be forthcoming from society. Lerman (1979) for example believed that the Principles for Counseling/Therapy with Women did not go far enough, were understated and hedged on the points related to optimal practitioner behaviors. Others contend that not every practitioner is an appropriate helper for female clients and that special training is necessary in "feminist therapy" (Rawlings & Carter, 1977).

Spiegel (1979) presented counterarguments to the orientation of developing specific standards and training programs for counseling women. The gist of her discussion is that consequent to a philosophy of separatist-type training: (a) divisiveness and territoriality would be created within the profession; (b) focusing on any one client characteristic is not justified empirically; (c) each client attribute demands relevant knowledge and counselor attitudes that are growth-enhancing; (d) emphasizing nonsexist values and extensive knowledge about women implies less importance for nonsexist values for the other sex and falsely conveys a distorted view of men and women living and relating in isolation of one another.

As I ponder the separatist and generalist philosophies, I'm also quite aware that in addressing the topic, training counselors of men, I constantly referred to parallel considerations about training and women. I haven't been able to separate the issues conceptually, and I don't believe the interests of our female and male clients are best served in the long run by that type of splitting on a theoretical or pragmatic basis.

There are several ways that advocates of women and of men can work in alliance on the issue of sex equity: in classrooms, training sessions, workshops, research projects, and in various task forces or committees. Whatever the setting or activity, it's possible for gender-related issues to be the basis from which implications for both men and women can be evidenced and demonstrated. When a workshop or seminar would be designed to specifically address a topic with a male or female focus (e.g., male role conflicts in parenting or female achievement needs), both sexes can be recruited and welcomed as audience. In research the spirit of alliance would be reflected to a refreshing degree by examining various phenomena with sex differences and similarities as points of discussion. Women and men as collaborators of research, particularly in the areas of sex roles and stereotypy, would facilitate a spirit of alliance. And perhaps we can also look forward to the day when men and women will eagerly seek out involvement in APGA and APA sponsored committees on "Human Rights" which would replace our current committees on women (as suggested by John Holland, 1980). I believe it is only from this type of collaboration that significant progress will be made in sex-fair counseling for women and for men. If men and women don't collaborate it's likely they will compete -- for journal space, convention program time, curriculum modifications, budgets, and the like. Competitors are not allies.

Finally, I would like to point out the obvious. Sex role restrictions, conflicts and strains are not phenomena that one sex experiences from victimization by the other. Women collude in women's oppression as men collude in men's oppression. Men have some part to play in stereotyping women as women are part of the perpetuation of male stereotypes. The dynamics and need fulfillments of such complex interactions cannot possibly be diagnosed and understood by one sex in isolation from the other. If those of us, who by occupation are committed to the service of "understanding" and "conflict resolution," are unwilling to examine such issues in a spirit of alliance, who will?

Reference Notes

1. Committee on Women, Division 17 of the American Psychological Association. Issues in training for counseling women. Unpublished manuscript, 1980. (Available from Marilyn Johnson, Student Counseling Center. Rush University, 1743 W. Harrison St., Chicago, Illinois 60612).

2. Holland, J. Counseling psychology -- the next decade: Planning for alternative futures. Paper presented at the American Psychological Association, Montreal, 1980.

References

Birk, J. M. Experience based career exploration. In J. D. Krumboltz and C. E. Thorensen (Eds.), Counseling Methods. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976.

Birk, J. M. Providing life/career planning for women and girls. Palo Alto: American Institutes for Research, National Consortium on Competency-Based Staff Development, 1976.

Birk, J. M. Equity: The bridge between the sexes. Rhode Guide, 1979, 16 (3), 4, 6-7, 10.

Birk, J. M. Interest Inventories: A mixed blessing. Vocational Guidance Quarterly, 1974, 22, 280-286.

Birk, J. M. & Tanney, M. F. (Eds.) Counseling Women II. Special issue of The Counseling Psychologist, 1976, 6, (2).

Birk, J. M., Tanney, M. F., & Cooper, J. F. A case of blurred vision: Stereotyping in career information illustrations. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 1979, 15, 247-257.

Blimline, C. A. & Birk, J. M. A note of impatience. The Counseling Psychologist, 1979, 8 (1), 48-49.

Broverman, I. K., Broverman, D. M., Clarkson, F. E., Rosenkrantz, P. S. and Vogel, S. R. Sex role stereotypes and clinical judgments of mental health. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 1970, 34 (1), 1-7.

Hill, C. E., Birk, J. M., Blimline, C. A., Leonard, M. M., Hoffman, M. A. & Tanney, M. F. (Eds.) Counseling Women III. Special issues of The Counseling Psychologist, 1979, 8 (1).

Kell, B. L. & Mueller, W. J. Impact and change: A study of counseling relationships. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1966.

Lerman, H. The professional-political influence of principles for practice with women. The Counseling Psychologist, 1979, 8 (1), 51.

Marino, T. M. Resensitizing men: A male perspective. The Personnel and Guidance Journal, 1979, 58 (2), 102-105.

Moss, H. A. Sex, age, and state as determinants of mother-infant interaction. Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 1967, 3, 19-36.

Rawlings, E. I. & Carter, D. C. (Eds.) Psychotherapy for women: Treatment toward equality. Sprinfgield, Illinois: Chas. C. Thomas, 1977.

Rohrbaugh, J. B. Women: Psychology's puzzle. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1979.

Rubin, J. Z., Provenazno, F. J. & Luria, Z. The eye of the beholder: Parents' views on sex of newborns. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 1974, 44 (4), 512-519.

Scott, R., Richards, A. & Wade, M. Women's studies as change agents. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 1977, 1, 377-379.

Spiegel, S. B. Separate principles for counselors of women: A new form of sexism. The Counseling Psychologist, 1979, 8 (1), 49-50.

Stricker, G. Implications of research for psychotherapeutic treatment of women. American Psychologist, 1977, 32 (1), 14-22.

Tanney, M. F. & Birk, J. M. Women counselor for women clients? A review of the literature. The Counseling Psychologist, 1976, 6 (2), 28-32.

Unger, R. K. Male is greater than female: The socialization of status inequality. The Counseling Psychologist, 1976, 6 (2), 2-9.

U. S. Department of Labor. 1975 Handbook on women workers Bulletin 297. Washington, D.C.: Women's Bureau, 1975.

U. S. Department of Labor. 20 Facts on women working. Washington, D.C.: Women's Bureau, 1979.

Vedovato, S. & Vaughter, R. M. Psychology and women courses changing sexist and sex-typed attitudes. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 1980, 4 (4), 587-590.